



## WHAT IS A CATCHMENT?

A catchment is an area of land surrounded by natural high features such as hills or mountains. All the runoff from rainwater in this area will flow to a low point like a stream or river and eventually out to the bay. Some will percolate down through the soil and rocks to become groundwater. Under the influence of gravity, rain falling on the land flows from the top of the catchment through a network of waterways from small gullies and streams, into larger rivers and then to the bay.

### Why do I need to know about catchments and waterways?

Understanding how catchments work is very important because whether we live high up in the hills or down by the coast, we all have an effect on the health of our environment. We are all connected by the waterways that flow from the mountains through the catchment to the ocean.

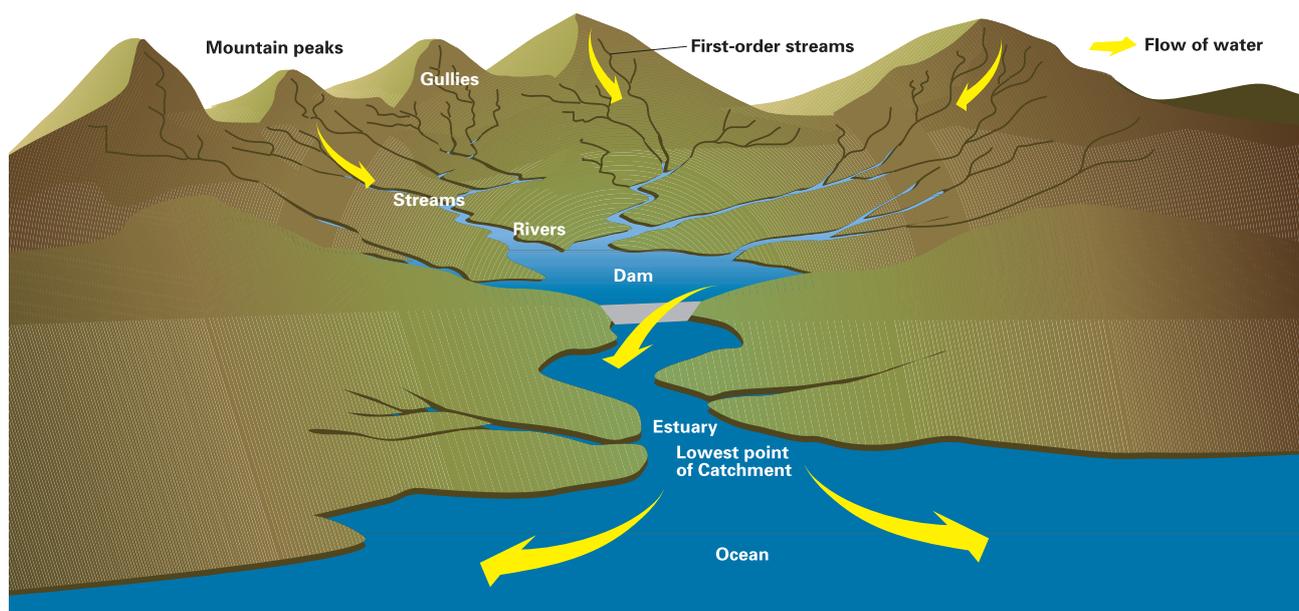
Water falling on the streets and in our backyards flows down into the stormwater system, then out to the local creek and river and ends up in Moreton Bay. This water is not treated at all along its journey. Therefore rubbish, leaked car oil on the roads, excess fertilisers from gardens and other pollutants will flow with the stormwater into waterways and harm the natural environment. The catchment connects us all, showing that “we’re all in the same boat”

and what we do in our backyard affects the health of the waterways.

### The invisible waterways – ‘first-order’ streams

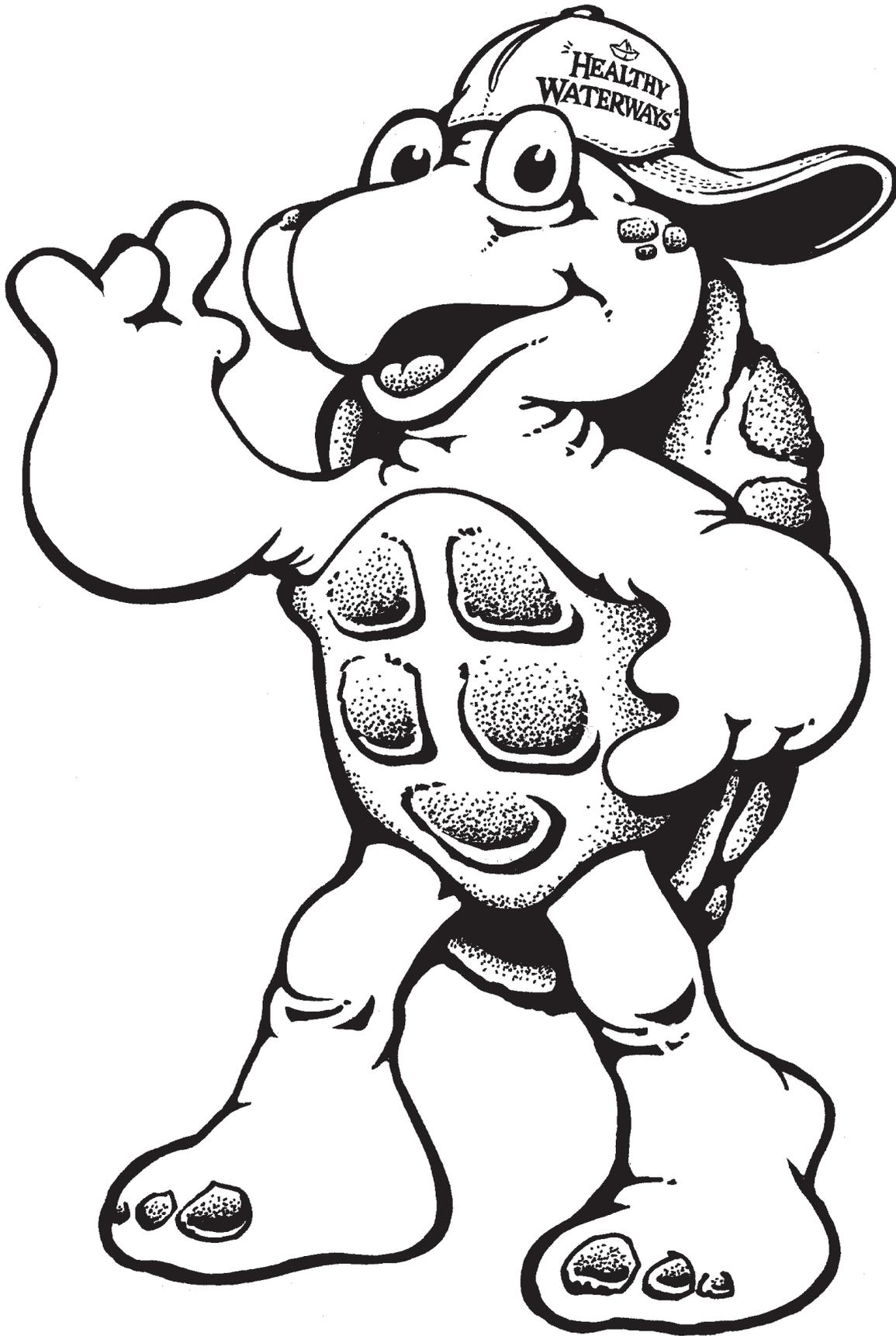
A large proportion of the waterways in South East Queensland are made up of small gullies in the top or ‘upper’ parts of the catchment. For much of the time, these are dry and not easily identifiable as important parts of the waterway system. However after rain, they become the drainage lines where runoff from rain collects and runs together to form the larger streams and rivers in the lower parts of the catchment.

In South East Queensland these gullies, or first-order streams make up a very large proportion of the length of our waterways. There are approximately 7,500 km of gullies in the total waterway length of 16,000 km. Most of these small gully networks have been poorly managed in the past and have lost their native vegetation cover. Vegetation plays an important role in holding the soil in place, preventing gully erosion particularly during heavy rainfall. Soil erosion in the upper catchment contributes to the sediment that can smother sea grass in Moreton Bay. The more protective vegetation there is to cover these upstream gullies, the greater the chance the waterways downstream will be healthy.



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# Colour-in: Hugo the Healthy Waterways Turtle



For further information about the  
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